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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the phenomenon of undergraduate cheating and reports on a survey returned by 232 students at Rutgers University (New Jersey) concerning their cheating experiences. Findings indicated 22 percent of students said they had never cheated in college, 45 percent indicated they had cheated occasionally (in "one or two" courses), and 33 percent admitted to having cheated in an average of eight courses to date. The most common cheating methods involved looking at other students' exam papers, arranging for someone else to take the exam, using "cheat-sheets" or other aids, and obtaining advance copies of the exam. Good students rarely objected to cheating by other students, and students often reported starting cheating because they saw lazy students getting better grades through cheating. Other findings indicated higher cheating by fraternity and sorority members; highest cheating by economics majors; least cheating by students majoring in the sciences; increased incidence of cheating by upperclass students; and a slight negative correlation between degrees of cheating and grade point average. A major reason for non-cheating was fear of getting caught. The cheating questionnaire is appended. (DB)

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UNDERGRADUATE CHEATING[1]

> "When I read [your assignment, 'write a paper about whether or not you've ever cheated in college'], my first thought was, 'Is he serious?' But then I thought again. Well, I don't know much about you. You could be older than I thought. You could seriously have meant [questions like] 'have I ever cheated'.
>
> Hah. Who hasn't? I don't know anybody in my generation that has never cheated or thinks it is really wrong . . ."
> (-- anonymous paper, sophomore female, 1989).

In 1989 and 1990, following the same methods used to collect anonymous written accounts about sexuality for Coming of Age in New Jersey[2], I asked undergraduates at Rutgers University to write me unsigned self-reports about academic cheating -- their own, or other cheating they know about personally[3] -- and in 1990 I also followed up the self-reports with a questionnaire. And if I was an innocent when I first suggested this subject, I'm not any more. For as these student writers describe it, the university at the undergraduate level sounds like a place where cheating comes almost as naturally as breathing, where it's an academic skill almost as important as reading, writing and math.

After reading these papers, in fact, and thinking about how many positive inducements there are for cheating built into undergraduate education, I don't wonder why students cheat any longer. For me, the more interesting question has become, "Why don't the students cheat more than they do?" For not all of them do, and even most cheaters don't cheat all the time.

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[1] © 1990, Michael Moffatt. Following an article about this research which appeared in The Chronicle of Higher Education October 24, 1990 (pp. A31-32), I've decided to make this report available to college authorities, reporters and other responsible parties who have asked to see it. I hope they will use with discretion. And I ask that it not be republished or copied for wider distribution or quoted at length without my express permission (phone: 201 545 0883).

[2]. Michael Moffatt, Coming of Age in New Jersey: College and American Culture. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1989.

[3]. As one of five possible paper topics for the anthropology minicourse "Rutgers Student Culture" (070:293,02), taught in the early evening, Spring, 1989 and 1990 over 400 students each year -- enrolled in by students from all the New Brunswick undergraduate colleges.

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Since the influences on student cheating are general ones -- the ethics of American everyday life, undergraduate education as it is organized nationwide -- these Rutgers findings are also likely to typify students at other large, moderately selective universities in the United States. For reasons that will be suggested below, smaller schools are likely to have less cheating -- but still quite a bit, in my opinion. The influence of a highly selected, more academically driven undergraduate student body on levels of cheating (cheating in Ivy-league type institutions) is harder to predict on the basis of these results.

HOW MUCH CHEATING?

On the questionnaire, returned by 232 reasonably representative Rutgers students (see appendix 1)[4], less than a quarter of the respondents, 22 percent, said they had never cheated in college. A little under half, 45 percent, indicated that they had cheated occasionally, in "one or two" courses. And the remaining third, exactly 33 percent, admitted to what might be called "hard-core cheating." These heavy cheaters had cheated in an average of eight courses each during their college careers to date, with a range of from "three or four" to 25 courses. Most of them had done this in the big anonymous classrooms which are the pedagogical bread-and-butter of large public universities such as Rutgers -- but not all.

HOW TO CHEAT

If one wanted to create an environment for rich, almost detection-free cheating on exams, according to these reports, one would seat students close together in big classrooms where their

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4. Each year about a third of the students in the course wrote on cheating. Perhaps nine in ten described themselves as cheaters, either occasional or regular; the remaining tenth reported on widespread cheating among their friends and acquaintances. The questionnaire was an attempt to tap the levels of cheating among the other two-thirds of the students in the class as well.

When I checked the composition of the same class in an earlier year, it was disproportionately upperclassmen and women, and had a less-than-average number of science majors in it. Otherwise, it was reasonably representative of the larger student body at Rutgers in terms of undergraduate colleges belonged to, distributions of majors, grade-point averages, and fraternity-and-sorority memberships.

There's a chance, on the other hand, that the questionnaire underestimated levels of cheating among students enrolled in the class. For on the day it was given out, about a third of them weren't attending. And as the information below will indicate, non-attenders are more likely to be cheaters than the diligent students who make class.

professors wouldn't know them and they wouldn't know their professors. One would make virtually all their learning passive. One would make their grades depend entirely on their performance on two or three tests -- multiple-choice tests, preferably machine-graded, ideally only slightly rewritten from semester to semester. One would design, in other words, the setting in which many undergraduates do in fact receive most of their formal education at present.

The principal kinds of cheating that occur in this opportunity-rich environment can be predicted by inverting standard understandings of honesty in exam-taking. Students should take their own exams -- so look at other exams when possible, and it's almost always possible; or arrange to sit next to a good student; or arrange for someone more proficient than yourself to take your exam for you. Students should draw only on what's in their own heads on exams, on what they really "know" -- so sneak "cheat-sheets" and other aids into exams with you. Exams are "fair" because, even if they don't cover all the material in a course, they're random selections, and no student has seen them in advance -- so arrange to study with the help of advance copies of an exam not necessarily available to other students.

In more detail, in rough order of decreasing frequency and increasing difficulty and risk:

"<u>When in Doubt, Look About.</u>"

The most common technique for cheating on in-class exams is to look at one or more neighbors' tests. 33 percent of the types of cheating admitted to by the hard-core cheaters on the questionnaire took this form (see table 1). Students suggest that almost all big exams are proctored so casually that it's easy to get away with "wandering eyes." Some students use special techniques or equipment as well, however -- sports caps with bills, for instance:

> "Baseball caps are the best device to cover your eyes non-conspicuously without drawing attention of the proctors around you." (-- junior male).

A senior male says he especially favors the "neck stretch" -- "pretending your neck is sore from looking at your own paper is a great way to get to look at your neighbor's paper."

Slanting classrooms also facilitate wandering eyes. The crowded seating conditions which are virtually inevitable given class sizes and space limitations at places like Rutgers make cheating much easier. One student draws the line at classes with enrollments of 100 -- cheating in bigger classes, not cheating in smaller. A junior female writes:

TABLE 1

Relative Frequency of Different Types of Cheating Admitted to by Hard-Core Cheaters, Questionnaire

Type of Cheating	Percentage of Total Cheating Admissions[5]
Copying off another exam, either by prior arrangement or serendipitously	33%
Studying selectively and cheating `round robin'	7%
Using a cheat sheet or the equivalent	18%
Studying with the help of a past exam (counted only if known to be like current exam)	21%
Studying with the help of a current stolen exam	5%
Buying etc. a paper	5%
Plagarizing etc. a paper	10%

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5. These percentages only indicate how often a given type of cheating was mentioned by hardcore cheaters, not how many times each one of them was done.

Two minor forms of cheating listed on the questionnaire -- cheating on take-homes or on homework -- were not counted in this distribution.

"Most of my [freshman and sophomore] classes contained 300 to 500 people, so the chances of cheating and not getting caught were in my favor. . . and [due to the way the students were] positioned so close together, one had easy visual access to at least five other students' papers."

Most cheaters know that some professors hand out two or more versions of the same test, and most agree that this safeguard is easily defeated by selectively swapping tests when the proctorsaren't looking, or by checking which of the several visible tests is identical to your own, and only cheating off them.

Any standard multiple-choice exam makes cheating particularly easy. Essays are tougher, though several students say it's possible to pick up the content of essays from fellow students' exams and rephrase them. Machine-readable forms, on the other hand, are a gift from the gods, according to many students:

"Scantron sheets are a joke. All one has to do is pass the sheet to a friend and take that person's in return. No proctor or professor ever notices. You can even hand in your friend's sheet without ever being asked questions."
(-- junior male).

Students cheat off one anothers' exams in a variety of ways. Some arrange to copy off better prepared confederates in advance, either as a pure favor, or in exchange for similar favors in other classes. Or two or more students agree that each of them will study only a fraction of the material, all of them will sit together, and everyone will cheat `round robin' off the respective specialists' exams. 7 percent of the hard-core cheating this kind of `round robin' method.

Various forms of what might be called `ripple cheating' are also reported -- B cheats off A, C cheats off B, etc. At one selective eastern college last fall, I heard of a particular refinement of the ripple. Athletes on a sports team which uses a "wedge" formation on the playing field are said to sometimes sit in the same formation in big lecture halls -- a `point-man', two teammates behind each of his shoulders, and so on back in a vee. Only the point-man studies, I was told. All the others copy the results over the shoulders of the youths in front of them. (Sophisticated group cheaters sometimes change the odd answer from test to test so their results are not absolutely identical).

Students who can't or don't bother to arrange for confederates have other methods. One writer `comparison shops,' keeping an eye on five or six nearby exams and going with the majority or plurality on each multiple-choice answer. Others have various theories about how to locate reliable strangers to

exploit. Sometimes good students are known of through the grapevine. The cheaters then cosy up to one of them, or set up a ripple-cheating scheme connecting the good student to themselves and a number of their friends.

Other students are convinced they can spot reliable victims by their nerd-like appearances and behaviors -- odd clothing and body language; sitting down front and taking lots of notes; sitting alone (if they're alone, they're not planning to cheat, which means they may have confidence in their own preparation). Several cheaters believe that any student who looks Asian is likely to be well-prepared. One Asian student, on the other hand, writes that he has exploited this stereotype to cheat systematically from primary school through college. His teachers and professors, he says, have always assumed that a "quiet little Indian kid" like him is safe, while watching "potential cheaters who look like football players" much more closely.

A number of students also note, on the other hand, that you can't always trust external signs. "What if you cheat off someone who is totally clueless?," as a sophomore woman puts it. Yet even minimally efficient approaches to locating victims can often serve the purposes of the laziest of students, who have typically skipped most of their lectures and readings and are simply trying to avoid an "F."

Members of some fraternities have highly organized ways of not attending classes while, in their cases, possibly doing very well on exams. They require pledges taking the same big courses in which several brothers are enrolled to attend all the classes and take notes for the brothers, who themselves can loaf around elegantly back at the house for most of the semester. Just before exams, the brothers then cram with the help of several sets of notes, and maybe some old or even new copies of the test (see below) -- and then perhaps take the exam wearing their handy baseball caps . . .

It isn't clear how often victims know they're being cheated off of by strangers, but apparently they don't usually object very vigorously when they do. "One of the rudest things a student can do," one cheater writes, "is not `share the wealth.'" In very big classes, good students may calculate that a few nearby cheaters won't lower the overall curve that much. They also know that their imitators can't do any better than themselves.

What makes students much more angry, on the other hand -- and what students frequently mention as the reason they have started cheating in the first place -- is when they see lazy students cheat for better grades than they themselves have achieved, while working hard and trying to stay honest.

Using Cheat Sheets

The use of cheat sheets is another common classroom technique; 18 percent of the hardcore cheating involved cheat sheets or the equivalent. But cheat sheets also require preparation -- occasionally, ironically, a self-defeating amount of it:

> "I have planned to cheat a couple of times [in the past] . . . But the thing was, [when] making up my `cheat notes' to put in my lap, [both times] I learned everything I wrote down. When the exam was handed out, I looked at it and said, `I know all this shit!' So I ended up not cheating and still got As!" (-- senior male).

Prepared cheat sheets are usually used rather than left in hiding, however. They are more reliable than wandering eyes. You don't have to wonder how good a student your victim is. And if you have a cheat sheet, you're not defeated by those rare professors who decided to proctor their exams with real care, or to create significant space between students, or to assign seats so as to break up potential confederates:

> "Even with a watch-dog patrol -- five or six teaching assistants as well as an instructor -- one can find his way around the surveillance by concocting several small `cheat sheets,' approximately 1" or 2" by 1" or 2", and place them on the chair between one's legs. These cheat sheets contain all of the terms, formulas, and miscellaneous information needed to pass and perform well on the exam."
> (-- junior female).

Cheat sheets are carried into exams in many ways, and it's an art to remove them unobstrusively from concealment and relocate them in more visible places, and to dispose of them later:

> "I won't tell you where [my cheat sheets] are hidden, but it is somewhere you'd never believe!"
> (-- junior female).

> "I put mine up a sleeve, or in a pocket, or in a shoe. After I get them out carefully without drawing attention to myself, they go immediately under my test sheets and then may be used and then hidden under the exam if there happens to be a wandering professor or TA . . . . After the exam they get quietly crumpled and stuffed into my shoe to be dropped in the nearest trash can once I'm out of the classroom."
> (-- sophomore male).

Not all cheat sheets are written on paper. Sometimes students arrive early and write key terms on their desks in pencil, perhaps rubbing them out later. One youth claims to have used "clues taped inside sun glasses" and a "Walkman [stereo tape-

recorder] with answers interlaced within a song." An Accounting major notes that "if you have a nice expensive calculator, it is possible to program the formulas right into it." Body parts, clothing, and shoes are other popular media:

> "I write formulas and key words on the bottom or all over the side of my sneakers. Then I sit with one leg folded under the other so that the unbended leg covers my shoe. Whenever I need an answer, all I have to do is move my leg over a little bit. If the teacher happens to come walking by, there is no paper to hide. I simply move my leg back to cover my shoe. I had one pair of running sneakers my freshman year in college that were covered, I mean covered, with mathematical formulas and equations." (-- senior male).

Similar to cheat sheets, but used less often, are the following dodges:

-- notebooks left open on the floor in badly proctored exams.
-- notes stuffed in women's handbags to consult in bathrooms.
-- study material left in the stalls in nearby bathrooms.
-- books and notebooks concealed in empty classrooms for use on unproctored makeup exams.

Using Old Exams, Stealing New Ones

Most students and some faculty members don't consider it cheating to study with the help of old exams. Diligent professors ought to be rewriting their tests in any case. But many professors do not do this, or only change their exams in minor ways, so that acquiring old exams can be almost as good as stealing new ones. And there's often reliable student hearsay about which professors are laziest about rewriting.

Therefore, one service many of the fraternities and sororities offer their members is extensive files of old exams[6] -- exams legitimately handed back to students in past classes, or stolen from professors in past exams. It's a pledge duty in some fraternities to sneak into exams in courses the pledges aren't taking and steal tests for future use. Non-Greeks can also locate old exams through "connections" as well. Or they can go on the open market for them. As an Economics major explains,

> "My roommate doesn't have to scam exams in her English major, so she doesn't know how to go about it. The rule to follow with any large, popular, semi-easy class is as follows: 'Go to the Roost [the all-night study hall on the main College Avenue] the night before [the exam]'. Plain and simple, because that's where everyone goes to see what

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6. And terms papers, for plagiaristic reprocessing -- see below.

everyone has and to swap or find a copy.

> [So for one such course], I took [my roommate] there and did the scamming for her. I think she considers this cheating. I have become indifferent to it, however, because it is necessary in my classes."

21 percent of the types of cheating among the hard-core cheaters on the questionnaire, in any case, involved the use of old exams known to be similar or identical to current ones.

Large classes which give midterms and finals at two different times are also susceptible to the acquisition of insider information about exams -- attend both times, but only submit your exam the second time; find and debrief someone who was in the first exam; abstract the first exam and use it to study for the second. And for classes with only one set of midterms and finals, it's always possible to invent an acceptable excuse for missing the official exam, locate and study a copy of it, and hope the makeup will be similar. One young woman claims she and her roommate have the letterheads of a doctor and dentist on file, which they occasionally use, with a xerox machine, to write believable medical excuses to get makeups.

The most dangerous and admired of exam scams is to steal an advance copy of a current test. Due to the risk, this is done much less often than the scams above; 5 percent of the hardcore cheating involved stolen tests. A number of methods are described -- "knowing who the TA is sleeping with"; operating through a work-study student who does the xeroxing in the relevant department; stealing the exam out of the professor's "computer file"; and straightforward breaking and entering. Sometimes these covert activities are planned meticulously in advance, often but not always by fraternities. Sometimes they are more serendipitous:

> "[Once] we were on our way back from a party and we had been drinking. We were passing the building one professor's office was in. It was a Friday night and there were still lights on inside. The front doors were open, probably because the janitors were working late. We made our way to the professor's door and my friend Jim pulled out a credit card; I covered the door to the stairs to make sure a janitor wasn't coming.
>
> When the door gave way, we went inside and under a pile of papers was a copy of the exam. We took it and photocopied it the next day. We returned on Sunday and [the professor's] door was still unlocked the way we left it, so we returned

the exam. It was cheating at its best, but much too risky."[7]
(-- junior male).

After an exam has been obtained in advance by any method, of course, the students' ability to do well on it is only as good as their ability to figure out the right answers to all the questions even with plenty of time -- and here the fact that the serious cheaters are also often the students who have skipped most of their classes and readings can place them at a real disadvantage. So occasionally, once again, students sometimes notice that the whole endeavour of cheating can collapse under its own complexity -- can amount to more work than simply studying honestly in the first place would have done:

> "The biggest and most dangerous time I cheated freshman year was on a General Psych exam. I got a B on the first exam without cheating. But when the second one rolled around, a male friend from a fraternity stole the actual exam and offered it to my roommate and me if we would look up all the answers for him. We were ecstatic. . . I was designated to make copies at the Roost -- I was so scared!!! I thought the teacher would definitely be next to me just ready to catch me. . . .
>
> Well, we took the exam, and it was the right one. My roommate and I each changed a few answers `just to make it look good.' But it turned out that my roommate got a C and I got my same B. The worrying about getting caught and looking up all the answers took just as much time as I would have spent studying!"
> (-- junior female).

Hiring a Pro

One senior remembers how he learned about this last method of classroom cheating back as an innocent freshman:

> "I was sitting in my Intro. to Economics exam totally lost, lucky if I could answer half the questions. I wasn't planning to cheat. . . . The next thing I knew the guy sitting next to me asked if I needed some help. Of course I said yes. . . . He ripped the first couple of pages off his test and passed them to me. I copied every problem exactly as he had it . . . and he handed me the rest of the test and gave the first part to the guy sitting behind him.

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[7] I find the confessions in most of these cheating self-reports generally believable. But when cheating becomes a stunt, especially a male stunt, stories about it have to be taken with several grains of salt. These accounts are still worth citing as evidence of the mentalities of some undergraduates, however, in my opinion.

> After I handed him back the remaining pages, he got up and left. He really confused me when he didn't even hand in the test but just ran out of the classroom. I handed in my test and waited for my roommate who had no idea about my good fortune. While I was waiting, the guy sitting behind my 'savior' came out and explained that my savior was a senior economics major in there to help him. . . . he was not registered in the class. I received an 'A' on the exam and was able to pull my 'D' up to a 'C+.'"

Finding another student to take your exam for you can be the most reliable and undetectable way of getting a good grade in a big class, some cheaters say. But it can be expensive. Aside from the occasional good friend or lover, most `pros' expect to be paid. It is also sometimes necessary to deal with those few professors who actually check student identifications in big exams.

Using another student is therefore probably a desperation measure for most students, or one they use only when they luck into the right conditions for it. None of the 78 hard-core cheaters who returned questionnaires admitted to this form of cheating, through five or six of the self-reporters describe it. The same Asian student quoted earlier is one of them. He has apparently made `the hired pro' his basic method for getting through college, both for taking exams and writing papers. All it takes is money, he explains, and some fake IDs (and good talent-scouting on his part):

> "Fortunately I am pretty wealthy. The first thing I found out about Rutgers students is that they always seem to need cash. There's always someone willing to write a paper for about forty or fifty dollars. Also I have over ten students take most of my exams. I give them twenty or twenty-five dollars, make them an identification with their picture and my name on it, and they go in and take the exams for me.
>
> In my three years in college, I have probably only taken one-third of my exams myself . . . If this paper was counted as part of our grade,[8] there would be no way I would be typing it right now."

Small Class Cheating

Students apparently cheat far less often in smaller classes than in large ones. One reason is the great proportion of essay-

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[8]. These unsigned self-reports were graded pass-fail; if they weren't handed in at all, a student lost one grade from her or his course grade according to the exam.

type tests in these classes, harder to cheat on. Another is heightened fears of getting caught using most methods described above. You are more visible; you are more likely to be known by name and face. There may be a positive personal factor as well: you may feel you know your professor better as a human being and therefore feel less willing to rip her or him off. (A number of regular cheaters piously indicate that they have never cheated on a professor they have liked or respected).

Unless you really hate a professor you know personally, of course -- in which case you may try to cheat to get revenge even in a small class, however difficult it might be:

> "Once a friend and I decided to take a class together which we heard was not too difficult. But the professor did not stick to a clear curriculum, and we decided that the only way to do well was to cheat. The class was taught in a small classroom, and the teacher knew almost everyone. He didn't like us. . . .
>
> The professor, who most people disliked, told us he was going to make us take the final at an earlier time [than the officially-scheduled date]. When the day came, however, he told us the University would not let him give it to us until the following week. In order to make us believe he wasn't incompetent, he held up an envelop, telling us it contained the exams, [and put it back down on his desk] . . .
>
> I took no notes this whole class, but just stared at the envelop all period. After class, a swarm of people went to talk to the professor about their grades, causing a commotion. [My friend and I joined them]; I put my books down [on the teacher's desk] on top of the envelop [of exams]. Then I asked my friend to take my books [and the envelop] upstairs pretending he had to make a phone call (we had planned this during class), and I asked the teacher some inane question. My friend stole one copy of the exam, and returned my books [and the envelop] to the teacher's desk. We looked up the answers, and the professor was none the wiser."
>
> (-- junior male).

Outside-the-Classroom Cheating

The main form of outside-the-classroom cheating mentioned in the reports is fraud in the writing of papers: buying them, stealing them, reprocessing one's own previous papers or those of friends or fraternity or sorority associates; or the plagarization

of papers from study guides, books, or other library sources.[9] Cheating on papers is described less often than in-class cheating in the reports, and the hard-core cheaters do less of this type of cheating according to the questionnaire as well -- but not inconsequential amounts of it. 5 percent of their cheating involves buying or stealing papers, and 10 percent involves various forms of plagiarism.

It may be that students in writing-centered humanities and social sciences are likely to value their literate skills for their own sake, and want to practice writing for themselves. They can, on the other hand, practice their literate skills through plagiarism, or by writing papers for others. An Art major describes how she plagiarizes:

> "Any normal person who has cheated on a paper knows that in order not to get caught you must take the words you have borrowed and change them around slightly so you aren't quoting the person and therefore won't have to bother with footnotes. Footnotes are basically a pain in the ass. However, in order for your paper to look legitimate, you must include at least three (use your discretion)."
> (-- junior female)

An English major describes even more elaborate techniques that oddly approximate real scholarship, while simultaneously managing to pervert them without guilt, and apparently with no serious repercussions to date:

> "I would say that in my three years here I have written about 50 papers -- none of which I have done completely on my own. Whether or not the professor states `no outside sources,' I will go to the library and take out as many books pertinent to the subject as I can find. Then begins the process I like to call `creative plagiarism.' I will sort through the books to find quotes or passages that apply directly to my topic. By blending the quotes I get from the books with my own ability to write fluidly, I have been able to compile a 3.3 average in my major.
>
> I have also resorted to lifting a paper or two (or three) from a professor's mailbox, photocopying it, and using it whole or in part. It is really frightening how easy it is to take things from a professor's mailbox. However, I have

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9. Other forms of outside-the-class-room cheating include faking lab results, copying other students' "homework," getting help with or having other students write take-homes for you and -- when professors give out take-home questions for studying -- writing up bluebooks in advance and smuggling them into exams.

> also paid the price because I have had several papers lifted myself. (It is also handy now and then to tell a prof that your paper must have been stolen from her mailbox, and could you please have some time to type it over.)"
> (-- junior female).

WHY CHEAT?

Some students cheat just to get by; cheating obviously makes it possible for them to do very little classroom work and spend most of their time enjoying the rich adolescent pleasures of college life. Others study hard and cheat as well in order to get the best possible grades. And still others combine moderate cheating with moderate studying in the pursuit of more mixed goals:

> "I cheat to get good grades, to save time, and for the pure pleasure of getting away with it." (-- senior male).

A few cheaters claim to be entirely untroubled by their cheating:

> "I never feel guilty about cheating. I feel I have high moral and ethical values and I do not feel they are compromised in cheating on college exams"
> (-- junior female).

Many more feel guilty about cheating, to differing degrees. Their most common situational defence is, `If almost everyone else cheats, I'd be stupid not to.' More holistically, a few believe that cheating is the way of the wider world:

> "Cheating is a practice very common in our culture. . . Everyone wants to make a lot of money and cheating is an easy way to beat out other people. For every Ivan Boesky or Michael Milken caught cheating there are hundreds more who are not caught." (-- senior male).

Therefore -- part of the undergraduate trope of "Rutgers as real world"[10] -- academic cheating is just one more way in which the actual norms of the undergraduate university conveniently prepare you for the realities of adult life.

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10. Late-nineteenth century American college students believed that the rough-and-tumble peer group organizations of late-nineteenth century college life prepared them for the American business world after college much better than anything that took place in the classroom. Late-twentieth century Rutgers students apply the same thinking the bureaucractic aspects of the University: learning to push for your own needs through an uncaring, half efficient university bureaucracy gets you ready for over-bureaucratized American society after college (see Coming of Age, chapter 2).

One way cheaters often fine-tune their situational moralities is to claim they only cheat in the unimportant courses they "have to take" in college, never in their majors. The knowledge they learn in their majors will presumably be useful in their careers. In other subjects, however, all they want is the grades, not the substance. So if they cheat successfully in these courses, far from "cheating themselves," they're achieving exactly what they want, rationally and effectively.

Many cheaters cheat in their majors as well, however. One Spanish and Communications admits to doing so, but still believes it's wrong to cheat in some majors: "students in the medical professions and engineering shouldn't cheat . . . because the information these students learn is valuable and practical." Liberal arts knowledge is useless and can therefore be approached amorally, in other words, as opposed to the knowledge that keeps people alive and buildings from falling down.

As noted above, many cheaters begin cheating in order to keep up with the competition. If you're an honest student struggling through a tough lecture course to get a "C," and you see some `blow-it-off' who's rarely attended class waltz into the final and use a cheat sheet or "wandering eyes" to get a "B," you may decide to start cheating in the future, at least selectively. If you don't, people like him may come out of college with better GPAs than yourself. And how fair would that be?

A few cheaters cheat very selectively, in protest against what they see as the more `Mickey Mouse' aspects of multiple-choice testing:

> "Often I will study for six or seven hours for an exam, but I will also have a cheat sheet prepared which contains some of the more rote information. These are facts which I just don't think are important enough to commit to memory, but unfortunately some professors do" (-- sophomore male).

Others cheat more generally, out of greater anger -- for "revenge" against teachers they dislike, or in reaction to what they see as other alienating aspects of academic Rutgers at the undergraduate level:

> "As a freshman, I was a bio-premed student. I did not cheat at all because I was still full of dreamy ideas of college. [But] instead of charming classes and informative textbooks, I was faced with chemistry, teaching assistants who could not speak English, and boring, boring classes of 600 hundred students or more.
>
> I quickly changed my major to psychology and decided I would only take classes for my major and `blow-off' courses

> from then on. . . . I see cheating as a form of revenge -- on a professor I dislike, on a subject, on a tough class, on Rutgers bureaucracy, on a poor grade, and most importantly, on the R. U. Screw. Everyone I know uses cheating as a way to get back at Rutgers from screwing us around, and believe me, it does feel good to get an `A' in a class you only passed by bullshitting an essay or peeking at someone's scantron sheet."
> (-- junior female).

Related to "revenge cheating" is what might be called "thrill cheating" -- cheating for the pure fun of cheating, cheating as one of those wild-and-crazy things you try to get away with in college, to be "legendary" among your friends for doing:

> "There's something about getting away with doing something immoral that I can appreciate, getting something for nothing. I sometimes see cheating as a game which makes academics more interesting." (-- junior male).

> "Some people cheat for the pure excitement -- just getting away with it. If your professor explains that no one has ever cheated with him, you can take it as a given that someone in the class will take him up on his challenge."
> (-- sophomore female).

WHO CHEATS?

Fraternity and sorority members

On the reiterated evidence of the reports, the same generalization can be made about cheating and fraternity membership that can be made about reactionary sexism and these same extracurricular organizations.[11] You can be a hard-core cheater without being a Greek. But if you want to be a cheater with good peer-group support, go join a fraternity -- or a sorority, in this case.

By Major

Similar if weaker associations seem to exist between majoring in certain subjects and cheating, according to the papers and the questionnaire. Of Economics majors who returned the questionnaire, only 13 percent were non-cheaters, 37 percent were occasional cheaters, and fully half -- 50 percent -- were hardcore cheaters (see table 2). Anticipatory socialization for modern American business life? If you are an Economics major and a fraternity or sorority member, in any case, your chances of not being involved in systematic academic cheating appear to be almost nil.

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[11] c. f. Coming of Age in New Jersey, pp. 261-262.

TABLE 2
Levels of cheating by major, questionnaire

Major	Non-cheaters	Occasionals	Hardcores	(N)
Economics	13%	37%	50%	(38)
Communications, Poly Sci, Psych	20%	38%	42%	(60)
English and History	35%	46%	18%	(28)
Sciences	40%	55%	5%	(20)

Students in other big non-science majors typified by mass lecture-hall teaching reported nearly as high levels of cheating as Economics. Majors in Communications, Political Science and Psychology combined indicated that they were 20 percent non-cheaters, 38 percent casuals, and 42 percent hardcores.

The smaller number of students majoring in the two largest humanities, on the other hand, English and History combined, reported the much lower levels of cheating predicted by their different types of testing -- 35 percent non-cheaters, 46 percent casuals and only 18 percent hard-cores. And the scientists had a distribution all their own, though their numbers were small. Of the twenty Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Engineering or Mathematics majors who filled out the questionnaire, eight claimed they had never cheated in college (40 percent), eleven say they had done so only once or twice (55 percent), and only one admitted to hard-core cheating (5 percent).

By College Class

On the reports, some cheaters indicate they learned to cheat in high school and then just added more sophisticated methods to their repertoires when they arrived in college. A few non-cheaters say they stopped in college, however, deciding it was now time to "get serious" about their educations.

A number of upperclassmen claim to have matured out of cheating since their freshman and sophomore years:

> "Freshman year, exams were hard, and I spent my time meeting new people, learning about college life, making collages for my walls, spending hours with my roommate making answering machine messages . . . not doing homework [and cheating].
>
> I am a now a junior, and I've declared my major, and I really enjoy it. Gay as it may sound, I even like reading most of my textbooks. I am constantly doing homework [because I'm also busy with extracurricular activities], and I'm getting As and Bs on my exam [without cheating]. It feels great. I don't foresee cheating in the future . . . I deserve better than to cheat myself." (-- junior female).

At least as many, on the other hand, indicate that they have cheated more and more in college, and a few compare cheating to an "addiction" which, once indulged, is difficult to control.

And the questionnaire tends to suggest that -- though many upperclassmen resist or swim against the current -- on the whole, the longer you are in college, the more likely you are to be corrupted by the amount of cheating going on all around you. 35 percent of the freshmen who returned the questionnaires, for instance, reported themselves as non-cheaters, verses 3 percent hardcores. Sophomores were 36 percent non-cheaters verses 21

percent hardcores. Juniors were 23 percent non-cheaters verses 37 percent hardcores. And seniors were down to 12 percent non-cheaters verses 45 percent hardcores (see table 3).

By Grade Point Average

The reports suggest that students mix cheating and academic work in many different ways. And the questionnaire supports this. In each category -- non-cheater, occasional cheater and hardcore cheater -- there are students at every level of academic success as measured by grade point average (GPA).

In terms of overall averages within each category, on the other hand, there is also a mild negative correlation between degrees of cheating and academic achievement. Noncheaters haveaverage GPAs of 3.09 (N = 50), hardcore cheaters average 2.98 (N = 76)[12], and within the hardcores, what might be called the "super-hardcore" cheaters -- students who have cheated in ten or more of their college courses to date -- drop to average GPAs of 2.84 (N = 14).

This drop, particularly among the super-hardcores, may simply indicate that the more confirmed cheaters tend to be the lazier students. Or it may mean that the most extreme cheaters have, in the end, really succeeded in "cheating themselves" -- have systematically seen to it over the years that they haven't learned the academic skills necessary to make them fully competitive with their student peers.

WHY NOT CHEAT?

Because you might get caught! According to the reports, many students are terrified by the theoretical possibility of being caught cheating -- of the disgrace of being thrown out of college, a blot on their records for life. But most cheaters estimate the odds of this actually happening to them at Rutgers to be minute. And their experiences tend to bear them out.

Three or four of the convinced non-cheaters, on the other hand, say they don't cheat because they <u>were</u> caught in the past and have "learned their lessons," and no one reports being caught fairly and then reverting. The following melodramatic account, by a junior male, is typical:

> "`Would Joe Dough and Walter Knucklehead please see me after class,'" exclaimed Professor R. "Oh, boy, we're in a

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12. I didn't calculate the average GPAs for the occasional cheaters, on the theory that they'd cheated too little for it to have had any relation to their GPAs.

The totals and subtotals of cases, the Ns, don't always match up from table to table, because not every questionnaire was fully made out.

TABLE 3
Levels of cheating by college class, questionnaire

Class	Non-cheaters	Occasionals	Hardcores	(N)
Freshmen	35%	61%	3%	(31)
Sophomores	36%	43%	21%	(42)
Juniors	23%	40%	37%	(57)
Seniors	12%	43%	45%	(102)

heap of trouble,' I whispered to Walter. . . .

My roommate and I had decided to collaborate in our efforts on this particular [take-home] exam. Each of us had worked on gathering material for two of the four questions and had exchanged our findings. Real smart, huh? . . . In our naive freshmanlike wisdom and quest for expediency, we had plagiarized each others' work. . . . Without the time to read each others' exams since we were virtually writing and typing out fifteen pages each the night before, the most evident similarities and errors of our ways had gone unchecked until that most unforgettable day. . . .

Professor R made us feel embarrassed and ashamed of what we had done. She emphasized that it was not she who was the victim, but us! . . . And as we sweated our fate, knowing that one was the four-letter word `expulsion,' she decided to give us a second chance. I could have kissed her right then and there, but it probably would not have been the best idea at the time. . .

[Since then] I have taken Prof. R's words to heart and truly matured in the way I've approached my education. Honestly."

What other reasons do students have for <u>not</u> cheating, despite the pervasiveness of cheating all around them? Here, in conclusion, are a few more of their rationales for honesty, taken from the questionnaires of that less-the-quarter of the undergraduates who haven't -- or haven't yet -- cheated at Rutgers:

"I want to be different in some way."

"I <u>know</u> I'd get caught! I'm extremely unlucky."

"I just couldn't handle the pressure of cheating."

"You've got to be pretty desperate to cheat at Rutgers. A minimal amount of work will get you a C. A bit more will get you a solid B."

"I'm not insane like most people I meet here about grades -- I think that's the bottom line."

"I don't cheat because I don't trust anyone else's answers."

"I want my grades to be mine."

"The rationale is usually that the professor sucks and so it's o. k. as a way of getting even. But that still doesn't make it right."

"It wears away at your spirit."

"I'd feel guilty for the rest of my life!"

"Gimme a chance. I'm only a freshman. Maybe I'll cheat on your final."

APPENDIX I, CHEATING QUESTIONNAIRE (4.90)
(Michael Moffatt, Department of Anthropology).

1. Your college class? [freshman, soph., etc.]?_____
2. Your major? _____
3. Your GPA (grade point average)? _____

4. Have you ever cheated academically in college?
____ yes ____ no
If "no," you are finished. But I would appreciate it if you would write on the back how you've managed to avoid the temptation to cheat in college.

5. If so, in how many of your classes have you cheated?
____ one or two
____ some or many (indicate approximate number:_____)
____ all or almost all

6. What forms of cheating? (if you've done more than one, please prioritize -- 1 for what you've done most often, 2 for your next most common method, etc.).
____ copied off someone in an exam without prior arrangement (don't count the occasional glace -- only copying that made a real difference in your grade).
____ arranged in advance to copy off someone in an exam.
____ studied selectively and copied 'round robin' with a group of friends (each of you specializing in one part of the material, non-specialists all copying off each specialist).
____ used a "cheat sheet" in an exam (includes any written material introduced illegally to help you -- words on sneakers, clothing, body parts etc.; notes left open; study materials left in bathroom; etc.).
____ acquired or stolen a previous copy of an exam (or acquired reliable information about same -- count only if you had good reason to believe that your current exam would resemble the previous one closely).
____ acquired or stolen an exact advance copy of a current exam.
____ had someone else take an in-class exam for you.
____ had someone else write all or part of a take-home exam for you.
____ faked or stolen or borrowed your results for a lab-report or for other "homework."
____ bought, borrowed or stolen a paper not your own, or had someone else write it for you.
____ plagiarized all or part of a paper from a published source.
____ cheated in other ways. Please specify:

7. Were you honest in your answers to this unsigned questionnaire?____ yes ____ no
(If so) THANKS!